
MEASURE • BUILD • FINISH

CARPENTRY GUIDE

License before quoting.

Control the scope.

Protect gross margin.

SCOPE | MATERIALS | SAFETY | MARGIN

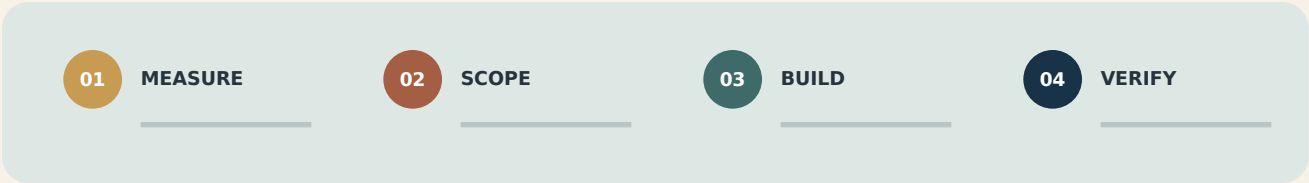
Veteran's Strategic Solutions LLC



START HERE

How to Use This Guide

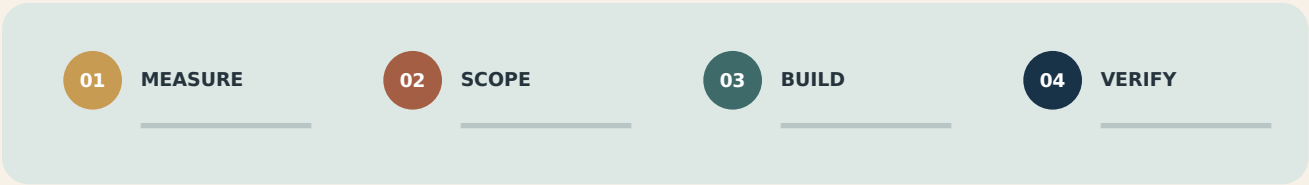
Read the core guide first. Then use the worksheets to confirm competency and licensing, define a bounded repair or finish-work offer, budget tools and insurance, estimate labor and materials, document scope and changes, invoice completed work, track gross margin, and control permits, structural, electrical, lead, silica, tool, ladder, fall, dust, property, and subcontractor risks.



TURNOVER REPAIR | Clear one documented punch list with defined materials, exclusions, and acceptance.

PIECE	USE
Core guide	Begin with a bounded turnover repair list or finish-work project only after the required license, competency, insurance, and permits are confirmed.
Operating kit	Use the startup, budget, estimate, work authorization, invoice, job tracker, and safety pages for every project.

1. The bet



Two things must be true, and the first one is not about the market.

The first is skill. Carpentry sells a trade. Nobody pays twice for a deck that racks or trim that gaps, and unlike coaching or writing, the customer can see the quality from across the room. If the honest answer is that you are a capable weekend woodworker rather than someone who has framed, hung, and finished professionally, that is not a disqualification — but it decides which tier of this document you start in, and it should be answered before anything is bought.

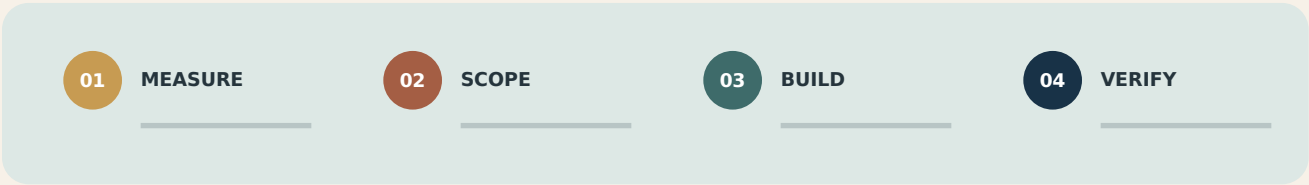
The fastest zero-budget test: call four property managers and two real estate agents and ask one question — “When a tenant moves out and something is broken or dated, who fixes it and how long do you wait?” If the answer includes a wait of weeks, that gap is the business. If they name a contractor who shows up promptly, you would be fighting an incumbent for the same work.

The three biggest reasons it fails:

BUSINESS LENS	CONTROL
License	Confirm trade, contractor, permit, exam, insurance, and renewal requirements before quoting.
Scope	Separate finish repair from structural, electrical, plumbing, hazardous-material, and design work.
Margin	Track labor, materials, waste, travel, rework, subcontractors, and changes by job.

CORE GUIDE 01

1. The bet Continued



This can be a regulated and capital-intensive line, and competency, licensing, insurance, permits, and continuing education may stand between the provider and lawful work. A verified licensing barrier can also reduce casual competition.

Estimating errors, not bad work, kill small contractors. Underbid a job by twenty percent and you work three weeks for nothing. Every trade has this problem and carpentry has it badly, because material prices move and hidden damage shows up after demolition starts.

Cash flow. Materials come out of your pocket before the customer pays, and general contractors are notoriously slow payers. A profitable job can still put you underwater for six weeks.

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2. The license — verified with the city, and it comes first

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The tier that fits residential carpentry is General Contractor C — building, remodeling, or repairing one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses. \$100 biennial fee. General Contractor A and B cover larger and commercial structures at \$200 biennial. Licenses expire December 31 and run two years.

What a new application requires:

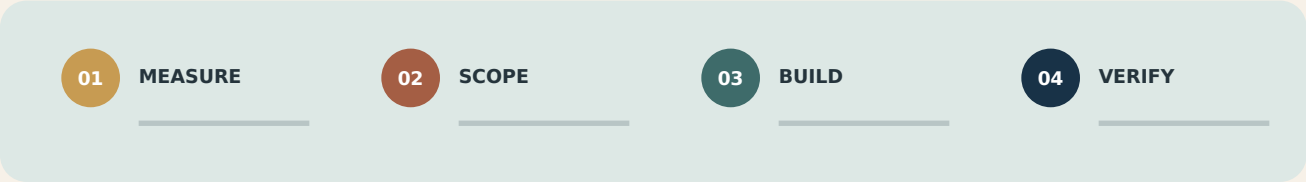
The application form

A Certificate of Competency



FINISH WORK | Measure precisely, protect the occupied space, and document hidden conditions before changes.

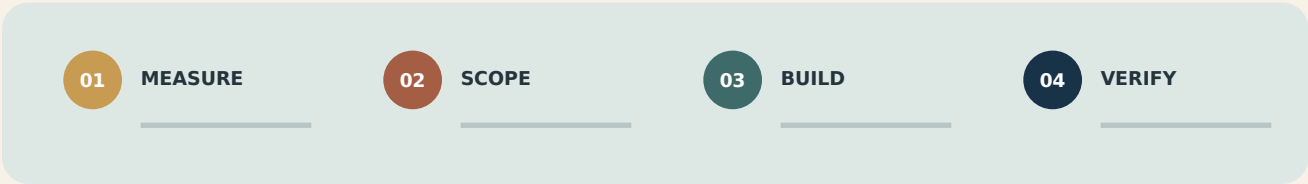
2. The license — verified with the city, and it comes first Continued



- Copy of driver’s license, and a photo for the ID card
- Six hours of continuing education within the previous calendar year
- Comprehensive General Liability Insurance
- Workers’ Compensation

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2. The license — verified with the city, and it comes first Continued

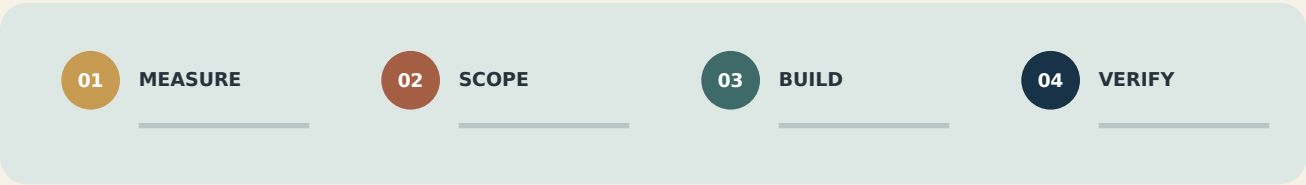


Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

The sequencing this forces: exam, then insurance, then license, then tools. Not the order on the infographic, which puts tools at step five and treats licensing as a checkbox.

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3. Who pays, in their own words



The property manager and landlord. The steadiest work in this trade and the least glamorous.

“Tenant moved out and the cabinets are destroyed.”

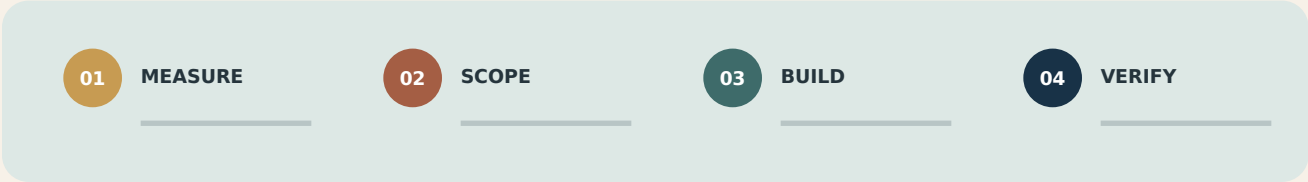
“I need it turned around before the showing.”

“My guy retired and I don’t have anybody now.”

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3. Who pays, in their own words

Continued



The homeowner with a specific project. Deck, fence, trim, built-ins, a door that never closed right.

“The deck’s rotting and I don’t trust it.”

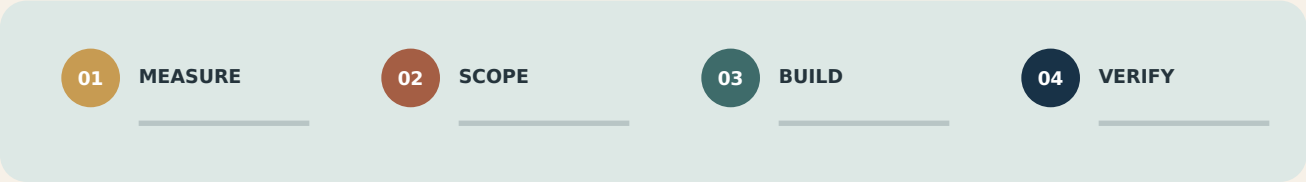
“We got three quotes and two never called back.”

The general contractor who needs finish help. Steady, lower-margin, and it pays while you build a name.

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3. Who pays, in their own words

Continued

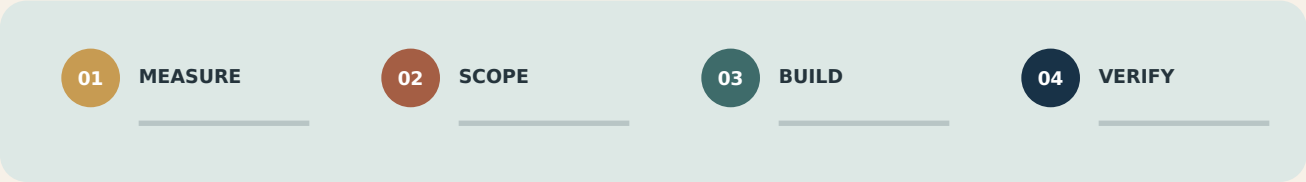


Where they are: property management offices, real estate agents, and referrals. Not advertising.

What triggers the buying decision: a move-out, a failed inspection, a listing, or something visibly broken.

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4. The smallest version you can charge for



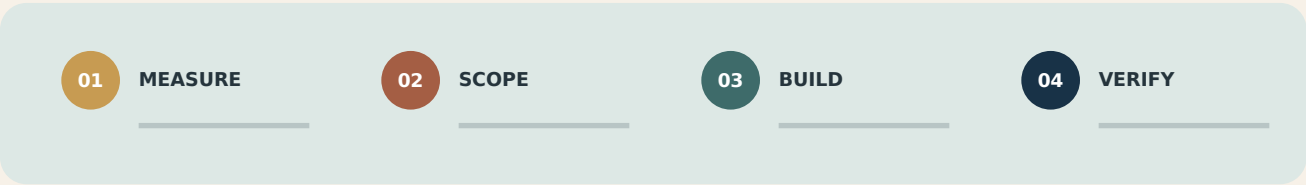
One product: the rental turnover repair list. A property manager hands you a punch list — door, trim, cabinet, drywall patch, shelving — and you clear it in a day or two for a flat price.

It uses ordinary carpentry rather than structural work, it repeats every time a tenant leaves, and one property manager with a portfolio replaces dozens of one-off homeowners. It is also the fastest route to a reputation, because managers talk to each other.

Fastest path to the first paying customer: one property manager, one free small repair done well, then ask for the next punch list.

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5. What it actually takes



One constraint to respect: your truck’s real payload is 1,238 lbs. A unit of sheet goods and a load of framing lumber will exceed that. Have material delivered, or pull a trailer — do not load the bed by eye.

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6. Pricing

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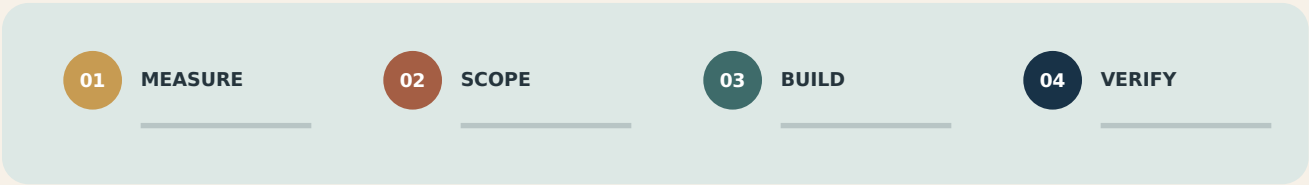
Price by the job, not the hour, and build in a contingency of ten to fifteen percent for what you find after demolition. Materials get billed at cost plus a markup, typically fifteen to twenty percent — carrying materials at cost is free financing for the customer and one of the most common ways small contractors lose money.

Which model to run first: the low tier, because it is repeatable, low-risk, and it is how you get in with property managers. Premium remodels are where the money is and also where an underbid can wipe out a quarter.



JOB CONTROL | Track labor, materials, waste, tools, subcontractors, approvals, and gross margin by job.

7. Honest assessment



This can be a regulated and capital-intensive line, and competency, licensing, insurance, permits, and continuing education may stand between the provider and lawful work. A verified licensing barrier can also reduce casual competition.

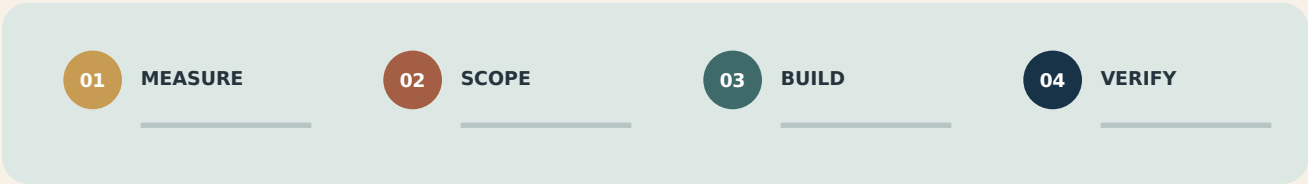
Sequence it honestly. Required competency, insurance, licensing, and permits come before the first dollar. If carpentry is a skill the provider genuinely holds, it can be a durable trade. If it is not, training and supervised experience come before selling [VERIFY].

The one metric: gross margin per job after materials. Below thirty percent, you are buying yourself a job rather than building a business.

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CORE REFERENCE

Startup Equipment and Compliance Reference

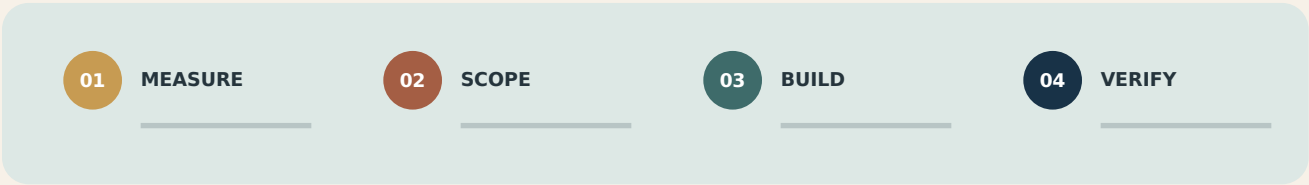


Use the source figures as the planning baseline. Replace local, personal, already-owned, and time-sensitive assumptions with actual quotes and requirements before launch.

Item	Cheapest source	Approximate cost
State or local requirement	Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.	[VERIFY]
Competency exam and prep	ICC exam; prep courses vary	verify current fees
Continuing education, 6 hrs	ICC and trade providers	verify
General liability insurance	Compare — required for the license	roughly \$600-\$1,800/year, verify
Workers' compensation	Ask the city how it applies to you first	verify before budgeting
Miter saw and stand	Used, Facebook Marketplace	\$200-\$450
Table saw	Used	\$300-\$800
Nail guns and compressor	Used or Harbor Freight	\$250-\$500
Levels, squares, measuring, clamps	Home Depot	\$200-\$400
Ladders, sawhorses, dust control	Home Depot	\$200-\$400
Trailer or truck rack	Facebook Marketplace	\$800-\$2,500 used

CORE REFERENCE

Source Pricing Reference



Use the source figures as the planning baseline. Replace local, personal, already-owned, and time-sensitive assumptions with actual quotes and requirements before launch.

Tier	Offer	Price
Low	Turnover punch list, half or full day	\$300-\$600 per day
Mid	Defined project — deck, built-ins, trim package, door and window installs	\$1,500-\$6,000
Premium	Kitchen or bath remodel, full renovation	\$10,000+

WORKSHEET 01

Startup Checklist

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DONE	ACTION	OWNER DATE NOTES
☐	Define the exact carpentry guide customer, problem, deliverable, service area or channel, and buying trigger.	
☐	Run the source's smallest low-cost demand test before buying major equipment or committing to long-term overhead.	
☐	Write the offer, inclusions, exclusions, timing, acceptance standard, and customer responsibilities.	
☐	Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.	
☐	Confirm federal, state, local, tax, advertising, privacy, accessibility, contract, and record requirements [VERIFY].	
☐	Obtain general liability, professional liability, cyber, property, auto, workers' compensation, and client-required coverage as applicable [VERIFY].	
☐	Create intake, estimate, scope, approval, delivery, quality-control, incident, invoice, and closeout records.	
☐	Price from actual labor, materials, equipment, travel, payment fees, taxes, rework, overhead, and reserve.	
☐	Complete one paid pilot and document the result only with written customer permission.	
☐	Track the one metric from the source, plus gross margin, delivery time, exceptions, referrals, and repeat work.	

WORKSHEET 02

Equipment and Budget Worksheet

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CARPENTRY SYSTEM | Standardize measuring, estimating, permits, safety, changes, quality, and closeout.

ITEM	NEEDED	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	NOTES
Business formation, registrations, licensing, tax, contracts, and professional review [VERIFY]				
General liability, professional liability, cyber, property, auto, workers' compensation, and client coverage [VERIFY]				
Core equipment, tools, supplies, safety gear, storage, maintenance, replacement, and backups				
Computer, phone, software, scheduling, payment, e-signature, records, security, and backup				
Website, business email, phone, listings, signage, accessibility, privacy, and marketing [VERIFY]				
Original intake, estimate, scope, checklist, quality, incident, invoice, and closeout templates				
Training, credentials, continuing education, renewal, testing, and professional memberships [VERIFY]				
Vehicle, delivery, travel, fuel, mileage, parking, tolls, rental, and route costs as applicable				
Bookkeeping, merchant fees, taxes, legal review, data protection, and records [VERIFY]				
Contractor, employee, payroll, supervision, quality control, and administrative support [VERIFY]				
Working capital, refunds, rework, claims, chargebacks, downtime, deductibles, and reserve				

BUDGET CONTROL

TOTAL ESTIMATE: _____ TOTAL ACTUAL: _____ CASH RESERVE: _____

Pricing and Estimate Template

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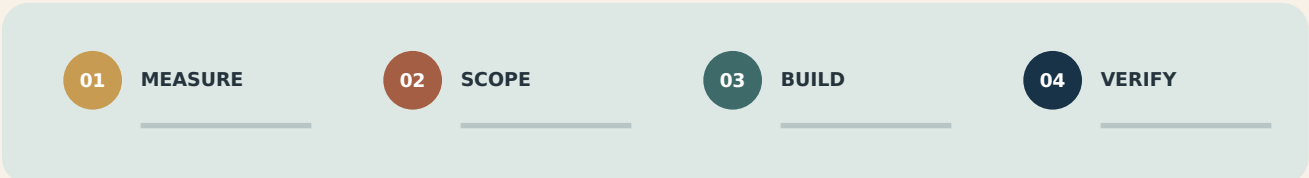
CLIENT	SERVICE LOCATION	ESTIMATE NUMBER	DATE

SERVICE OR INPUT	BASIS	AMOUNT
Discovery or intake	Customer and scope	
Core service or product	Quantity and basis	
Materials or direct costs	Actual or allowance	
Labor or professional time	Hours or fixed scope	
Equipment, delivery, or travel	Written basis	
Documentation and quality control	Included or added	
Approved option or add-on	Written basis	
Rush, after-hours, or change [VERIFY]	Written basis	
Tax or required fee [VERIFY]	Confirmed basis	
Total estimate		

TOTAL ESTIMATE	DEPOSIT OR AUTHORIZATION	VALID THROUGH

WORKSHEET 04

Carpentry Work Authorization



FIELD	AGREED DETAIL
Customer, legal entity, contacts, billing, service or delivery location, dates, and decision-maker	
Customer need, current condition, objective, constraints, success standard, and source documents	
Selected offer, quantities, deliverables, inclusions, exclusions, options, and completion standard	
Schedule, access, dependencies, customer preparation, approvals, delays, and communication	
Materials, equipment, substitutions, delivery, storage, utilities, security, and site conditions [VERIFY]	
Inspection, testing, checklist, documentation, acceptance, correction, and handoff	
Change orders, added work, hidden conditions, cancellation, rescheduling, and out-of-scope requests	
Fee, deposit, expenses, tax, invoicing, payment, late payment, refunds, and chargebacks [VERIFY]	
Licensing, permits, insurance, safety, privacy, accessibility, and customer-required controls [VERIFY]	
Warranty, maintenance, service response, damage, loss, limitation, and claim procedure [VERIFY]	
Confidentiality, records, photos, data, testimonials, portfolio use, retention, and deletion [VERIFY]	
Completion, acceptance, closeout, support period, complaint, dispute, termination, and signatures [VERIFY]	

Invoice Template

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BUSINESS	CLIENT	INVOICE NUMBER	DATE DUE

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	RATE	AMOUNT
Discovery or intake			
Core service or product			
Materials or direct cost			
Delivery or travel			
Documentation or quality control			
Approved option			
Approved change			
Tax or required fee [VERIFY]			

SUMMARY	AMOUNT
Subtotal	
Tax [VERIFY]	
Credits / adjustments	
Total	
Balance due	

Job Log and Lead Tracker

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DATE	LEAD SOURCE	NEED OR SCOPE	QUOTE	STATUS NEXT STEP

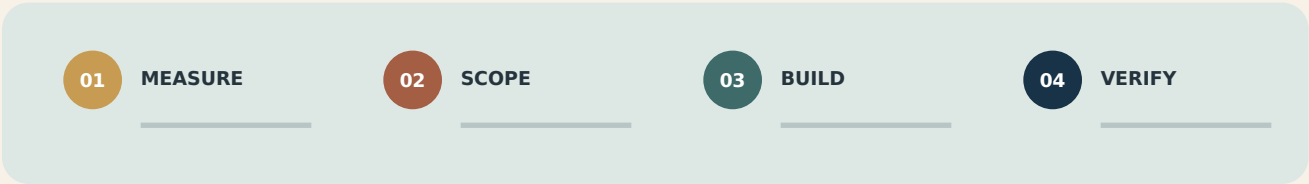
DATE	CUSTOMER / JOB	LABOR	MATERIALS	REVENUE	MARGIN
DATE	CUSTOMER / JOB	LABOR	MATERIALS	REVENUE	MARGIN
DATE	CUSTOMER / JOB	LABOR	MATERIALS	REVENUE	MARGIN
DATE	CUSTOMER / JOB	LABOR	MATERIALS	REVENUE	MARGIN

DATE	CUSTOMER / JOB	LABOR	MATERIALS	REVENUE	MARGIN
DATE	CUSTOMER / JOB	LABOR	MATERIALS	REVENUE	MARGIN

ONE METRIC

GROSS MARGIN / JOB: _____ CHANGE ORDERS: _____ REWORK HOURS: _____

Carpentry Compliance and Jobsite Safety



Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

CHECK	CONTROL	INITIALS NOTES
☐	Licensing, zoning, tax, advertising, privacy, accessibility, safety, environmental, and local rules are confirmed [VERIFY].	
☐	Required insurance, certificates, limits, exclusions, additional insureds, drivers, workers, and subcontractors are confirmed [VERIFY].	
☐	Written scope defines the offer, exclusions, responsibilities, schedule, acceptance, payment, warranty, and change control.	
☐	Equipment, tools, vehicles, products, software, storage, access, and backups are inspected and fit for the actual work [VERIFY].	
☐	Training, credentials, permits, inspections, records, recurring renewals, and customer requirements are current [VERIFY].	
☐	Customer, payment, property, employee, health, identity, and confidential data are minimized and protected [VERIFY].	
☐	Pricing, credentials, affiliations, testimonials, savings, results, and outcome claims are truthful and documented.	
☐	Incident, damage, spill, injury, complaint, refund, breach, interruption, and escalation procedures are written [VERIFY].	
☐	Work stops for unsafe conditions, missing authorization, inadequate coverage, prohibited scope, deception, or requirements outside competency.	

STOP RULE

Do not begin until competency, licensing, permits, insurance, utilities, structural scope, lead or asbestos status, silica and dust controls, fall and ladder protection, tool guards, PPE, access, occupancy, materials, changes, and emergency procedures are confirmed [VERIFY].